

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS



WINTER 2015

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Dear Reader,

This issue of the Ministry Report includes a [short survey](#) about the report, how you use it, and whether there are ways that it can be improved. A few minutes spent responding to the questions will help us to serve you better.

Thanks,

Henry Hess, Director of Communications



Back to God Ministries International

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is committed to reframing lives with God's story by proclaiming the Gospel, discipling believers, and strengthening the church.

- As mobile devices emerge as the most popular way to reach people, websites need to be upgraded to make them mobile friendly. Our Indonesian ministry is experiencing this challenge. We currently have three main websites giving access to devotional materials and radio and television programs, while also providing users access to staff for discipleship. In order to maintain and grow our mobile audience, the Indonesian outreach is expanding its online ministry through an app that offers all of these resources.
- In Burkina Faso, our French ministry, in partnership with Timothy Leadership Training Institute (TLTI), produces radio

programs corresponding to the TLTI Bible study, *Choosing Good Leaders*. It primarily focuses on how to choose church leaders, but also looks at choosing political leaders from a Christian perspective. With Burkina Faso experiencing instability within its government, the study is very timely. More than 200 people from 15 churches attend the *Choosing Good Leaders* study, and the audio program is being re-aired due to its popularity.

- Our Japanese ministry is reaching people in Japan and at least 87 countries where Japanese-speaking people receive our programs by Internet. For the past several years we've sponsored an annual summer camp and two open house gatherings at the ministry center to encourage isolated Christians and to reach out to seekers. Two participants came to Christ while attending camp. We also held the fourth annual Concert of Hope for listeners in the tsunami-stricken area of northern Japan.

BTGMI thanks God for faithful prayer and financial support through ministry shares and gifts from churches and individuals that help us reach that goal.

backtogod.net

Home Missions

Joining God's mission matters because we are called by God to be his hands and feet in this broken world. As we read in John 20:21, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." We are sent to heal, to renew, to bring transformation – to be Christ's ambassadors, especially in the midst of our shifting culture.

Home Missions comes alongside

churches and campus ministries who are joining God's mission in their neighborhoods. Praise God for his work across the U.S. and Canada:

- In Edmonton, Alberta, a new church is making a difference in the community. With the help of funding from Home Missions, Avenue Church puts resources into the community through community events. This past July, they partnered with other churches in the area and put together a festival, Avefest, which brought together the kingdom of God in a diverse neighborhood.
- At the University of Washington, God is using Geoff and Ashley Van Dragt to support students through Graduate Christian Fellowship. Students delve into subjects like prayer, and carry that faith into action. While praying for Nepal after its devastating earthquake, the group decided to raise money to provide shelters for those in need.
- Coffee Break and the evangelism that happens there changes lives forever. What do these and other Bible Study groups need to grow and learn together? After discovering a need for new materials, the Coffee Break team came up with a new, innovative way to share materials online. The first publication with this new format, Discover Isaiah, is available to download now, with more Bible study options on the way.

crcna.org/pages/crhm.cfm

World Missions

One of the goals of ministry that takes place through CRWM is to strengthen the global church. The Great Commission was directed at the whole body of Christ. The church is God's feet, hands, and mouth to go into all the world.

CRWM strives to engage members of the church in North America with brothers and sisters around the world. Many of this quarter's highlights reflect that purpose.

CRWM is working to engage members of the CRC through its newest program, Momentum, in which teams

of young adults and mentors meet monthly for community service projects and devotional reflections. The final month of the program culminates with an international service project. For more information or to sign up for this program, visit crwm.org/Momentum.

Since its beginning in 2012, the Salaam Project has been helping members of the CRC reach out to their Muslim neighbors. Now Salaam has transitioned into a second phase, using ministry connections that Salaam Project manager Greg Sinclair made over the last three years. Sinclair will focus his efforts on some of Canada's largest urban areas—Toronto, Montreal, Hamilton, and Calgary.

In August, CRWM hosted a conference for theological education in Uganda. More than 300 participants attended, participating in a number of workshops to increase their understanding of the biblical worldview. Several representatives of the CRCNA served as workshop facilitators for the event.

For many years now, missionaries in Romania have found IMPACT clubs (Involvement, Motivation, Participation, Action, Community, Teens) to be a proven tool for enabling young people to be active citizens in their community. Now CRWM missionaries are using the IMPACT model in Central America, training club leaders and leading their own groups of teens in community-building programs.

crcna.org/pages/crwm.cfm

Timothy Leadership Training Institute

Timothy Leadership Training Institute is making a difference in congregations and communities around the world.

There are not enough formally trained ministers to provide leadership for growing churches worldwide. The TLT program is designed to fill this gap, because it goes where these leaders live and work, giving them the practical skills they need to build healthy churches.

TLTI's mission was recently revised to extend our reach through international and local ministry partners, reaching more countries and contributing to the spread of the Gospel.

Materials are written in an inductive style, using training manuals alongside the Bible. After each section, participants create action plans to take back to their congregations. The program can be reproduced without academic structures and trainees acquire skills to train others.

- In India, seven training groups have been developed.
- In Peru, area coordinator Sonia Barreda Perez reports that 51 Master Trainers are committed to leading trainings, and over 545 church leaders are working to finish the program.
- In Kenya, the Shikunga training group has developed through a partnership with Clark Van Halsema of IDEA Ministries.
- In Cambodia, trainings are conducted by Navy Chann and her husband Ly Chhay, CRWM Partner Missionaries. They became believers in a refugee camp in Thailand, returning to Cambodia to build up the church and reach this un-evangelized country.

We appreciate the support and encouragement from the people and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church, looking forward to continued reports of changed lives and transformed communities.

<http://www.tlti.org/>



Pastor-Church Relations

There have been significant personnel changes in the Pastor-Church Relations office.

Laura Palsrok served Pastor-Church Relations for 20 years and her departure marks the end of an era. Laura blessed all of us with a steady diligence, winsome modesty, kind trustworthiness and ready laugh. Thank you, Laura for your good service.

In August, Holly Koons left to join her husband in a home business and to give more time to their growing family. Holly's departure left a void in the

Sustaining Congregational Excellence and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiatives.

Denise Posie, one of our consulting staff, is dedicating half of her time to co-directing an RCA/CRC collaborative grant-funded project to develop leaders.

The combination of staff moving on, organizational changes, and new initiatives have contributed to the development of three new positions to be filled: a full-time administrative coordinator, a half-time vocational assessment coordinator and, yet to be developed, a person to help with the growing initiatives in support of classes, such as the regional pastor initiative and resourcing church visitors.

We look forward to the arrival of these new personnel and the reconfiguration of the PCR team.

crcna.org/pcr

Sustaining Pastoral and Congregational Excellence

A new project, *Connections: Embedding Regional Resourcing in the CRCNA*, will be an important part of strengthening a shift from centralized resourcing to coordinated regional resourcing, allowing greater regionalization and improved integration of ministry services.

The three-and-a-half-year project will involve three regions of three to four classes each, and will work to develop regional resourcers, plan and host annual gatherings to connect church teams with each other and with regional resourcers, form cohorts of church teams, resource individual congregations, connect congregations with similar resourcing questions/projects, and make preparations for expanding the resourcing model within the CRC.

At the completion of the project, it is anticipated that its impact will be far-reaching within the CRC and beyond. Congregations will be better able to discover and access resources and obtain the tools needed to impact their life together and with the community. The *Connections* project will move the denomination farther down the road

toward decentralization of resources, which is a key goal of its ministry plan.

A grant for the three-and-a-half-year project was received from Lilly Endowment Inc.

crcna.org/pages/spe.cfm

crcna.org/pages/sce.cfm

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Growth in our chaplaincy corps continues as we endorse new chaplains at an increasing pace (moving toward two per month) — and add names to a list of those interested in pursuing chaplaincy (now over 50 names). We currently have 135 chaplains involved in, or applying for, ministry in institutions “from the prison to the Pentagon.”

We are beginning preparations for our next annual chaplains’ conference (June 9-11, 2016). We have arranged for two speakers who will address the current trend toward reuniting psychology and spirituality.

With this conference, we will begin the celebration of our 75th year as an official chaplaincy office. Historical details are being collected, a short video being produced, and other attention being given to this marker.

All of this, of course, has budget implications, especially in an era of little growth in Ministry Shares, so some time must be devoted to fundraising. Many individuals and a number of churches are stepping up with donations to help. Our own chaplains — especially those retired or further on in their careers — are also being encouraged to step up and “pay it forward” in response to all the benefits they have received in the past.

In the summer we scheduled visits to colleges and seminaries for the coming school year, as we are experiencing a growing interest among students and staff for having us visit.

crcna.org/chaplaincy

Candidacy Committee

The Candidacy Committee is the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church that coordinates and facilitates the ordination of pastors. We provide

assistance to individuals, churches, and classis leaders as they navigate the process of becoming a Minister of the Word or Commissioned Pastor within the CRC.

In the past few months we have had an active time with a variety of projects. These include:

- Hosting seven new non-resident EPMC (Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy) students and three of their mentors for an orientation event. This program prepares students for candidacy, supplementing M.Div degrees at non-Calvin seminaries with information and instruction valued by the Christian Reformed Church.
- Consulting with leaders of the Korean CRC community to prepare Korean-speaking pastors for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Korean Institute in Ministry (KIM) is a pivotal tool, offering Korean language orientation to the CRC.
- Facilitating a retreat for 18 Chinese-speaking CRC leaders and spouses, with the goal of enabling them to feel included in the CRC, and to encourage and support each other and the Christian Reformed Church.
- Production of a report (still being written) on the uses of the office of Commissioned Pastor, to appear in the Agenda for Synod 2016.
- Working with a committee to reflect on and promote efforts toward Continuing Education for pastors. This committee’s report will also be presented to Synod 2016 via the Agenda.
- Preparation for implementation of the new “24-month mentor requirement” for all potential candidates. The goal is that by Synod 2018 all candidates being approved will have had two years of monthly vocational mentoring and also significant interaction at the regional (classis) level.

Contact Rev. David Koll (dkoll@crcna.org), Director of Candidacy, with any questions or concerns.

crcna.org/candidacy

Ministry in Canada

Classis Niagara and the Canadian Ministries Office are in the midst of a pilot project with a focus on the local church. The hope is that churches will be helped in the areas of Community Outreach, Volunteer Engagement and Leadership Development while the denomination learns new ways to connect to local churches. Integrating technology and ministry is part of the learning.

The web site crcna.org/Canada and the Ministry in Canada Directory are populated with helpful content, with Canadian church leaders in mind. We encourage you to check them out!

The CRC has made available help for local church leaders dealing with the struggle of pornography. We recognize the damage this can bring to individuals and to churches, and wish to be supportive agents of healing. You can find it at

<http://network.crcna.org/elders/pornography-help-churches-and-leaders>

Plans toward the Canadian National Gathering of 2016 are well underway, with a focus on contextualizing ministry for Canada. We encourage each church to consider sending a significant ministry leader to Wilfrid Laurier University from May 6-8, 2016.

The Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee has prepared prayer and worship material for churches to use. Considering the recent TRC journey, this material will be formative for many.

The Reforming Relationships art tour comes to a close in Regina after a few years of touring around Canada and playing a significant part in helping people see and understand the link between the gospel story and Indigenous people. Thanks to so many who made this work possible, hosted the tour, or attended the exhibits.

Refugee resources including videos, small group materials and sponsorship information can be found online (www.crcna.org/Canada). These resources have been recommended the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the World Council of Reformed Churches.

crcna.org/Canada

Classis Renewal

The topic of "Classis Renewal" captures the interest of more and more classes as the decisions of Synod 2015 roll out onto agendas of councils and classes.

More resources are being made available as the need for additional tools and skills grows. Issues include: What is a healthy classis? What makes a classis healthy? How to genuinely incorporate the diaconal dimension? How to best help classis functionaries to function better? How creative can we be and still honor the Church Order? Do we need to change the Church Order?

The Classis Renewal Group, convened by Colin Watson, CRC Director of Ministries and Administration, has begun to meet to develop stronger support for classes.

We are looking at:

- multiple initiatives to resource classes
- regional approaches
- strengthening the roles of classis functionaries
- cooperative and collaborative ministry

Small groups of classes will be assembled for pilot tests. The concept of regional resource delivery systems will be tested in different forms and regions.

The CRC Network contains a good set of resources for classis renewal and for classis functionaries, and more resources are being added:

network.crcna.org/classis. Also check out: crcna.org/pcr/classis-leaders.

Requests, questions, ideas, or feedback? Contact the Classis Coach, Karl Westerhof, at [616 241-1691 x2247](tel:6162411691) or kwesterhof@crcna.org.

crcna.org/resources/other-resources/classis-resources

Church Renewal Lab

Churches are structured to get the results they're already getting. The implication is clear: unless churches are perfectly happy with how they are making more and better disciples, something must change.

The Calvin Theological Seminary's Church Renewal Lab assists churches in navigating change by refreshing their missional focus and helping them

invest in four essentials that bring churches alive: abiding, vision, leadership and health. This refocusing takes place during a two-year journey as churches move through a three-step process of listen...imagine...do. Eight quarterly learning labs keep churches on task and provide fresh energy for the renewal process.

The Church Renewal Lab also conducts mini renewal retreats. The fall of 2015 saw retreats hosted in Lynden, Seattle, Sunnyside, Portland and Chino, drawing representatives from 23 congregations. The Church Renewal Lab will conduct mini-retreats throughout North America upon the invitation of a classical mission team.

We are also committed to training next generation leaders. Several Calvin Seminary students are being prepared for missional ministry through participation in Renewal Lab congregations, and six graduates of Calvin College's Jubilee Fellows program are assisting renewal congregations as Ministry Year interns during a gap year between undergraduate and graduate studies.

Interest in the Church Renewal Lab continues to grow. For example, representatives from the Christian Reformed Church of the Netherlands and the Theological University of Apeldoorn are visiting an upcoming learning lab to determine whether the Church Renewal Lab process may be of assistance for churches in their denomination.

A new cohort of congregations is being assembled for a June 2016 launch. Interested congregations should contact the Lab's director, Keith Doornbos (kdoornbos@calvinseminary.edu or 616-566-4413).

calvinseminary.edu/the-renewal-lab

Ridder Church Renewal

Ridder Church Renewal is beginning its 30-month process of transformational change for churches in six regions of the U.S. and Canada. A total of 95 churches are participating from New York City to Vancouver. This is the fourth time RCR has offered these learning events. Over 100 pastors and between 500 and 600 lay leaders will attend events held in New York, Ontario, Michigan, Wisconsin,

Iowa and British Columbia. One-third of these churches, pastors and lay leaders are in the Christian Reformed Church and the other two-thirds are in the Reformed Church of America.

Each event provides two and a half days of learning. The pastors lead teams of lay leaders in a way that lets them take responsibility for what they need to learn together to live more in tune with God's mission. The process is based on the conviction that the transformation of leaders leads to the transformation of the church.

The pastors begin this process by attending a *Faithwalking* retreat held in Houston, Texas. There, pastors go through spiritual exercises that lead to understanding the personal obstacles that get in the way of their own flourishing in mission. This process is a rich resource to help develop healthy relationships between pastors and churches at a time when many congregations are experiencing pressures and stress.

westernsem.edu/journey/ridder

Reformed Leadership Initiative

We are beyond the halfway point of a six-month launch period, and making good progress in the Reformed Leadership Initiative (RLI). In July the RLI Implementation Team came up with six potential locations in the U.S. and Canada, as well as a Co-Leader ministry description, and the names of 12 potential Co-Leaders from the RCA and CRCNA for the six Congregational Leadership Learning Networks.

We secured administrative support for the project and nine contracted Co-Leaders to facilitate leadership development to help our churches thrive in their own ministry context. We are learning where leadership development is already happening in our churches and how we can support, strengthen and sustain our capacity for leadership development at all levels. We are learning the importance of cultivating relationships as a strong foundation for the success and future of this initiative.

We are planning an event in January for all Co-Leaders, external coaches and the Implementation Team to launch the six learning networks.

Shortly following, there will be six "Taste and See" events. In anticipation of these events, some Co-Leaders are already making connections with pastors and church leaders as potential participants.

crcna.org/ministries/initiatives/together-again.



Worship Ministries

Worship Ministries continues to move toward becoming an established ministry. The exciting part has been connecting with representatives of CRC churches. We have been blessed as we learn from those individuals, discover gifted artists, musicians, writers, thinkers, and leaders in the CRC, and together discern how best to use those gifts to serve the church. We are eager to continue these conversations and add even more voices. One way we have widened the circle is through the appointment of an advisory board made up of:

Rev. Gary Bomhof: Alberta North
Rev. David Vroege: Eastern Canada
Pastor Elly Boersma: Niagara
Ms. April Jackson: Greater Los Angeles
Ms. Joyce Jackson: Hackensack
Rev. Aaron Gonzalez, Mrs. Janet Gonzalez: Minnkota
Ms. Darlene Silversmith: Red Mesa
Rev. Sung Hur: Pacific Hanmi

Networking:

Worship Ministries has a monthly e-newsletter aimed at keeping those involved with worship informed of events and resources. Please encourage your church to subscribe at crcna.org/worship.

We celebrate that 13 peer learning groups are underway: 7 groups from Canada, 5 from the United States, and 1 in the Ukraine (led by a CRC missionary).

Strengthening:

We have received and engaged responses regarding the proposed Liturgical Forms that have been sent to the churches for review. The response has been very positive. Most concerns revolve around the sacraments and how active God is in them. The

committee is reviewing the comments and editing the proposed forms as needed before they are presented to Synod 2016.

Resourcing:

Check out the new Worship Ministries website at crcna.org/worship for various types of resources.

crcna.org/Worship

Calvin Theological Seminary

140th Ministry Year Begins

This year marked the first time the convocation address was given by a tenured female faculty member. Professor Mary Vanden Berg, Professor of Systematic Theology, presented a message based on Psalm 1 – "Make Them Like Trees." See it here: vimeo.com/138780162.

Fall Enrollment

Calvin Seminary welcomed 72 new students this fall. Of our 300 students, nearly half are in the Master of Divinity degree program. Over half come from churches outside the CRC, and over 20 nations are represented in this student body, with many students coming from Korea and a growing number from China. We also enrolled five students who recently obtained certificates in our Hispanic Ministry program.

Distance Education Students

The M.Div. distance education program allows students to live, work and minister where they are, using a cohort model that includes on-campus intensives each semester. We have seen steady growth in this delivery platform now numbering 70 students. To learn more about the distance program, including our new Master of Arts distance program, contact Director of Admissions Aaron Einfeld at aaron@calvinseminary.edu.

Celebrating Our Contributions to the NIV

The New International Version (NIV) is marking 50 years of ministry from the formation of the Committee of Bible Translation in 1965, an interdenominational body that developed the most read English translation of the Bible. On October 9,

Old Testament Professor Michael Williams presented a chapel service that reflected on God's faithfulness and the story of the NIV. It can be accessed here: vimeo.com/143383438.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for Calvin Seminary as a learning community that forms church leaders who cultivate communities of disciples of Jesus Christ!

calvinseminary.edu

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

As a learning organization, we have been paying special attention to insights from our ministry partners and collaborators. Here is a sampling of these insights, with links to several of our recent initiatives.

1) Ongoing learning is key! Worship leadership is not something to learn once for all time; join the learning community of 1500+ at our annual Symposium on Worship, co-sponsored with the Center for Excellence in Preaching. <http://worship.calvin.edu/symposium/>

2) Intentional work takes time. Spending a year cultivating growth in your community can make a big difference. The Vital Worship Grants Program seeks to foster vital worship in congregations, parishes, and other worshipping communities in North America, with a special focus on projects that connect public worship to intergenerational faith formation and Christian discipleship. Learn more and apply at <http://worship.calvin.edu/grants/> by January 10, 2016.

3) All God's children matter! We don't just minister "to" persons with disabilities, but "with" them. Explore this theme at the Inclusive Worship Symposium (Nov. 21 at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois). Learn to plan worship that includes people at every level of ability and disability at this symposium for pastors, worship leaders, disability ministry leaders, and more. Co-sponsored by CLC Network, Joni and Friends, and the Worship Institute. See <http://worship.calvin.edu/news-events/events/inclusive-worship-symposium-palos-heights-il/>

4) Singing involves our bodies, minds, spirits, and voices. *Gospel Vocalises & Warm Ups* is a new book by Charsie Sawyer to provide tools for engaging body, mind, and spirit for healthy gospel singing.

5) Learning together across language barriers offers rich potential for growth in Christ. See this new section on our website: <http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/translations/>. While most of our web resources are in English, we have a number of key articles on worship in other languages: Korean, Spanish, and 10 additional languages. Search by article or language. Contact us with ideas for resources you'd like translated (cicwdir@calvin.edu)

worship.calvin.edu



Faith Formation Ministries

Raising the Bar for Youth Ministry

About once a month, the FFM team gets an email like this: "Our church is engaged in the complex process of hiring a youth worker. We'd love your help. Would someone from your team be able to join our planning meeting by Skype?" And so we do.

Gradually this ad hoc response to congregational inquiries is being folded into a coherent support plan.

In the spring of this year FFM launched a Canadian Youth Ministry Project under the leadership of Ron DeVries and Syd Hielema. Through this project:

- every Canadian classis now has a Youth Ministry Champion who develops relationships with the youth leaders in each congregation and becomes a support/resource person for them
- monthly youth ministry equipping webinars are being hosted on the CRC Network
- regional equipping events for leaders and/or teens are being sponsored
- a resource website and toolkit is being developed

Plans are underway for the Youth

Ministry Champions to gather in Burlington (January 2016) in order to build relationships, network, strategize, and strengthen a common vision.

Recently a group of youth workers from Classis Rocky Mountain invited Hielema to spend two days with them in Denver discerning how the Canadian project might be adapted for their classis. "That invitation was an answer to prayer," says Hielema, "our longing is that the Canadian experiment will eventually develop strategies that will be transferred to every classis in the CRC on both sides of the border."

crcna.org/FaithFormation

Calvin College

This fall we are pleased to welcome 1,026 new students to campus. We can't wait to see all they bring to the Calvin community, and the ways in which they will discover God's world with us in the coming years. As a college we invite incoming students to shape and be shaped by Calvin, contributing their gifts, talents and unique experiences to this place.

Our total student population this year is steady at 3,990. Those students hail from 55 countries, 48 U.S. states (plus Washington, D.C.) and five Canadian provinces. Also 10.3 percent of our student body is international, and a record 14.2 percent is AHANA students (African-, Hispanic-, Asian- and Native-American). We value this diversity as we work toward our transformation into a microcosm of the body of Christ, with members diverse and equal, as outlined in our strategic plan.

While our students stand on the holy ground of God's creation as they learn and live together at Calvin, we who serve here also understand that we are joining them for a time on a journey of pilgrimage toward the City of God. It is true that we hope to prepare students for meaningful work, but as we teach and serve our students, we see that their aspirations are bolder and their yearning is deeper than the promise of a career. Thank you for supporting our students, faculty and staff with your generosity and prayers as we walk this road together. Know that we see this support as a gift of divine kindness along the road, and we are thankful for it.

ServiceLink

crcna.org/servicelink

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Calvinist Cadet Corps

The international aspect of the Cadet Corps is in the spotlight these days, with interest coming in from churches who want to start clubs in Jakarta, Indonesia and Transcarpathia, Ukraine. The coordinator for Kenya, Daniel Nandwa, is preparing to come to North America for about three weeks in January. We are setting up meetings for him with Kenyan club sponsors from Michigan and Ontario, and he plans to be at Congress, where he can address men from all the councils in North America. We hope to see a strengthening of this aspect of the Cadet ministry.

We are excited about the Developer of Counselor Education (DCE) training program for Cadets, which has experienced a recent surge of interest. Five men have gone through the first two of three phases of training in the last eight months, and we look forward to starting more in the spring. In the meantime, training continues to occur regularly at council meetings (monthly) and regional meetings (annually).

The director transition continues. At the time of this writing, Dick Broene is still the Cadet executive director. However, it appears that Steve Bootsma is getting closer to approval by the U.S. to come and take the position. There are a few hurdles yet, so please pray for the transition, and that God be glorified through it all.

calvinistcadets.org

GEMS Girls' Clubs

(Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior)

GEMS focuses on girls discovering how much God loves them and his special purpose for them in the Kingdom.

Please pray for our new and existing clubs, for increased attendance and effective community outreach. We appreciate your support for our GEMS leaders and girls!

We are in need of prayer and financial resources for our international GEMS training, curriculum, and our Sister Club program. Relationships are strengthening with those in Columbia, Mexico, Philippines, Spain and many more countries.

There is high demand for our curriculum to be available in Spanish. Our goal is to translate all of our materials to meet this need. We believe God will provide the resources needed to complete this ambitious undertaking and expand our outreach.

We ask for God to continue to open avenues for distribution of our *Sparkle* and *SHINE Brightly* magazines, effective outreach tools that deepen a girls' understanding of who God is and how he works in their lives.

This year's theme is "Choose Truth" based on Psalm 119:105. All year we actively equip girls to choose God's Truth in a world that's giving them false messages. We desire for every woman and girl to walk with our Savior, increasing their thirst for him and his Word.

At GEMS Girls' Clubs we believe when a girl discovers who she was created to be, she can change the world. Thank you for continuing to uphold the GEMS Girls' Clubs ministry in prayer.

gemsgc.org

Youth Unlimited

Over the past six months, Youth Unlimited has been visiting churches and their youth workers. This has taken us to places like Ontario, Alberta, Colorado, California, Washington, Illinois, Arizona, Michigan, and more. One common message we hear from churches and congregations is the need for Youth Unlimited to be more present. We agree!

Youth Unlimited's heart is to serve every Christian Reformed congregation by providing life-changing, faith-forming events that include scriptural teaching, time for personal devotions, corporate worship, prayer and focused community service. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we believe these disciplines will provide each student a better understanding of what faith in Jesus Christ really means and how to live that out day to day.

For *Serve* 2016, the curriculum and

teaching will come from the Gospel of Mark. Written by Calvin Seminary students, the purpose of this curriculum is to enable students to encounter Jesus Christ in very real ways during their time at *Serve*. With their ministry of service, relationships with peers and mentoring from small group leaders, this curriculum will allow students at all places in their walk of faith to meet more fully a Savior who came to serve so that his love would be poured out for us.

Youth Unlimited is truly honored to serve students and youth leaders from Christian Reformed congregations. We will continue to give our very best. Your students and the church are the way Christ will shine his light and love in our world and we desire to help them shine brightly!

If you desire to join us in this great adventure, or you simply need a refresher on Youth Unlimited, you can find us at www.youthunlimited.org or by emailing jeff@youthunlimited.org.

youthunlimited.org/

loving mercy, doing justice

World Renew

So many stories of grace, transformation, renewal and hope.

On April 25, 2015, the earthquake slammed into Nepal, killing almost 9,000 people, destroying 598,000 homes, and severely damaging another 287,000 homes. World Renew responded with distribution of food, blankets and other necessities. The rehabilitation phase has begun, with the planning and ultimate construction of at least 200 houses. With thanks to God and his people, as of Oct. 13, \$2.6M USD had been donated through World Renew for the relief/rehabilitation process.

The High River, Alberta project is closed. More than 430 volunteers worked on 41 homes; the people who lived in those homes have been given hope, as were 315 families with whom the case managers worked.

U.S. director Carol Bremer-Bennett writes of her visit to Tanzania: "One gentleman who lived in extreme poverty could not provide for his family

prior to joining his community group. Now he has several businesses that more than meet his family's needs. He has been able to send his children to school, build a house, and give equipment to the church. He told us that community development (assisted through World Renew) 'opened the village's eyes and provided light to see where we should go.'"

Transformation in Guatemala: "Her parents, both of whom cannot read or write, did all that they could to provide for their family. On the small plot of farmland they owned, crops would be lost to landslides every year. Ines' father was forced to work on other farms while Ines and her mother found domestic work in homes in the surrounding communities. World Renew partner ADIP began work in Ines' community in 2006, and through ADIP, Ines' father learned new agricultural techniques, allowing him to cultivate his plot of farmland once again. The family began to sell the produce at local markets for additional income. Ines decided, with her father's support, to enroll in the local middle school program and graduated from ninth grade in 2014."

Visit www.worldrenew.net to learn more about these and other stories about the work that God is calling and leading World Renew to do.

worldrenew.net

Centre for Public Dialogue

The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue's education and advocacy efforts this quarter focused on equipping voters, hosting a pro-life series, physician-assisted death legislation, Truth and Reconciliation Commission follow-up, and refugees.

With the Office of Social Justice, we are hosting the What Being Pro-Life Means to Me series on the "Do Justice" blog.

Leading up to the Canadian election, we developed election resources in partnership with World Renew and the RCA to support Canadian voters in talking with candidates. More than 1,400 people viewed the resources and 1,000 visited the refugee resource page. See crcna.org/Vote2015.

Refugee advocacy has also been a major focus. Our team has received

several requests for our "Journey with Me" workshop (crcna.org/JourneyWithMe), which equips churches to journey alongside our refugee neighbours, and we recently led the workshop at Classis Hamilton and the Ancaster Day of Encouragement.

We are also hard at work using the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report on the legacy of Canada's Indian Residential School system to shape our strategic direction for the next several years, in close partnership with the CRC's Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee.

Finally, we have been working with a small group convened by CRC Canadian Ministries and CRC/RCA Disability concerns to consider responses to the Supreme Court decision that struck down the laws against physician-assisted death in Canada.

crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue.cfm

Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee

The Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC) educates and mobilizes CRC members and congregations to live in reconciled relationships as covenant (treaty) people before our Creator.

CAMC works toward three goals:

- Awareness and education of CRC members and communities of the shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada: of the present reality of Aboriginal people in Canada, and of the need for reconciliation and renewed relationships
- Engaging and building relationships with our Aboriginal neighbours to better understand each other and journey down the path of justice and right relationships
- Advocacy and seeking justice for Aboriginal peoples.

CAMC will be meeting in Regina and celebrating the homecoming of the paintings, "Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin, The Creator's Sacrifice" that toured nationally as the reForming

Relationship tour, with ceremony, speeches and a theatrical reading from a play based on the paintings. Please pray for the committee members as they travel, meet, and move forward with new projects.

CAMC will be soon ready to launch a prayer calendar that will center on missing and murdered Aboriginal women. CRC congregations and members will be encouraged to learn about this tragedy and through prayer, positively impact the lives involved.

A student volunteer will work with the committee to create a database/directory of Aboriginal Learning Centres across Canada - Friendship Centres, Urban Aboriginal Ministries, Museums, Cultural Learning Centres, and more - to provide CRC members and congregations with information about how to get involved in or start to pray for the places in their cities and regions that walk alongside their Aboriginal neighbours.

The committee will be discussing the 94 recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and how to work alongside the Centre for Public Dialogue about how we will respond to the calls of Action.

The committee continues to use the Blanket Exercise and encourages use of the resource "Living the 8th Fire". They will be finalizing the resources used for Aboriginal Ministry Sunday in June.

Some of the feedback from the tour:

"The paintings have been received with awe. People love them...Our service of reconciliation and healing was meaningful and powerful because the pics are hanging in our sanctuary and were strong witnesses to what was going on in the service." -Barbara Groote

"I had seen the reForming Relationships show in Ottawa, and knew firsthand of the great work and initiatives being done." -Heather

crcna.org/Canada/aboriginal-ministry/canadian

Office of Social Justice

In October, the OSJ launched the [Immigrants Are a Blessing Not a Burden](#) campaign to change the conversation about immigrants in the

United States. Though immigrants bring a wealth of cultural and economic growth and greatly bless our churches, mainstream culture frequently represents them as burdens. To get involved, visit BlessingNotBurden.org and like the campaign page by visiting facebook.com/BlessingNotBurden.

The OSJ also promoted [Journey with Me: Refugee Stories that Change Lives](#), a 90-minute interactive workshop that allows participants to hear refugee stories and learn more about how to journey with refugees in Canada.

This fall, the OSJ is hosting the [What Being Pro-Life Means to Me](#) series on the [Do Justice](#) blog with the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue, exploring what pro-life might mean for people in a variety of life situations. Sign up to receive weekly email updates at dojustice.crcna.org/what-being-pro-life-means-me.

The OSJ recruited organizers throughout the US and Canada to support 30 congregations that will engage in educational and advocacy efforts surrounding the United Nations Climate Conference (COP 21) happening in Paris this fall. To read more about how the CRCNA is recruiting those congregations and to get involved, read more here: dojustice.crcna.org/article/lets-partner-toward-climate-justice.

crcna.org/pages/justice.cfm

Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness, prevention and response.

Connections: Over 230 people interacted with us, with questions about safe church teams, awareness, policy, and abuse situations. Each month 400+ people receive our newsletter, prayer partners receive a prayer guide, and conversation happens on *The Network* (<http://network.crcna.org/safe-church>) and through monthly conference calls.

A committee mandated by synod to revise church order articles 82-84 was formed and began its work in July.

Safe Church partnered with Pastor-Church Relations to offer a workshop on Healthy Boundaries in Ministry Relationships to folks preparing to

leave for the mission field.

Work continues on new video resources, to build awareness and equip safe church team members.

Mutual benefits were realized with our summer student intern from Calvin Seminary.

CRC congregations across North America participated in Abuse Awareness Sunday, Sept. 27. Our website was updated; there were information tables, educational events, sermons, prayers, and offerings; and over 14,000 bulletin inserts were ordered by about 90 different congregations.

Abuse is part of the reality inside and outside of our congregations. We welcome opportunities to build awareness and equip churches to respond. Find out more about what we, as congregations, can do at www.crcna.org/safechurch.

Praise the Lord for opportunities to offer resources and meet needs in our congregations. Pray for our ongoing work to help build communities where the value of each person is honored; where people are free to worship and grow free from abuse; and where abuse has occurred, the response is compassion and justice that foster healing.

www.crcna.org/safechurch

Race Relations

The Office of Race Relations seeks to assist the church in engaging the ministry of racial reconciliation. This Fall we welcomed Bernadette Arthur as our newest staff member to Race Relations. Bernadette is the new Race Relations Coordinator for Canada and she comes with much knowledge and skills to engage the work of racial reconciliation.

We continue to offer workshops, trainings, presentations, and written materials to assist our congregations, classes, agencies, and institutions in responding to the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God. Our latest offerings are workshops called Restorative Practice Circles and The Blanket Exercise.

We covet your continued support

through your prayers and resources to help us continue this vital ministry of reconciliation.

crcna.org/race

Disability Concerns

Regional Disability Advocate for classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan Cara Milne has said, "Community is where you are known, noticed, and missed." Disability Concerns' mission is to help churches grow as communities in which all people with disabilities fully participate in the life of the church, and churches fully participate in the lives of people with disabilities.

Disability Concerns has helped about 600 CRCs identify and equip disability advocates to serve their own churches in this work. Regional disability advocates work with the church advocates to help them be most effective in helping churches. (If you don't know who your church or regional advocate is, please ask us at disabilityconcerns@crcna.org.) Thanks to 2 generous gifts, Disability Concerns was able to hire Dori Dykstra to phone churches to tell them about ways we can assist them in their ministry and to help churches identify someone to serve the congregation as a disability advocate.

Besides identifying and equipping individuals, Disability Concerns serves churches by maintaining and adding to an electronic library (available at www.crcna.org/disability) with over 600 resources on various topics including funding for building accessibility, congregational care, disability law such as the ADA and the AODA, mental health, children and youth, autism, parents and family, and much more. Our award-winning print and online newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, tells the stories of individuals and families living with disability so that readers can deepen their understanding of fellow members who live with disabilities.

Many churches celebrated disability week in October as requested by synod. If your church has not yet done so, we encourage you to do that as one way to deepen community so that every person involved in your church knows that he or she is known, noticed, and missed.

crcna.org/disability

Partners Worldwide

Partners Worldwide mobilizes long-term, hands-on global relationships to form a powerful Christian network that uses business as the way to create flourishing economic environments in all parts of the world. We create partnerships with Local Community Institutions (LCIs) to provide mentoring, training, access to capital and advocacy by engaging Business Affiliates (BAs). This builds up permanent local capacity designed to catalyze entrepreneurs and job creators and to celebrate business as a calling to do God's work.

The Global Agriculture Summit will be March 3-4, 2016 at Dordt College in Iowa and planning is underway. Partners Worldwide is excited to be hosting this event with Dordt College and World Renew. This summit brings together an international group of leaders from the fields of agriculture, business, community development, and the Christian academy for an intensive two days on how Christians, farmers, and NGOs can work together to restore our world. This year, the summit will focus on alleviating hunger and poverty. You can register at agrisummit.org. Pray that word will spread to many about attending this event. We also invite you to look into opportunities to use your agriculture knowledge with Partners Worldwide.

We are blessed to have growth in our Southeast Asia region as we signed four LCIs within one organization in the Philippines. CCT Credit Cooperative will be partnering in four major regions in the Philippines to help entrepreneurs by providing fellowship groups, savings and credit associations (SCAs), growth enterprise loans, business mentoring, entrepreneurship training, group insurance, medical assistance, and market linkage. Pray that this new partnership impacts many lives and takes us another large step toward ending poverty.

Thank you for your involvement, support, and prayers for the work of Partners Worldwide. We look forward to partnering with more CRC businesspeople and churches.

partnersworldwide.org